

Dhamma Everywhere: Awareness+Wisdom

A Spirit Rock Meditation Center Retreat with

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& Ma Thet, translator

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THE MORNING INSTRUCTIONS

DAY 1—“EVERY MOMENT IS TIME TO MEDITATE”

Since we are going to be practicing Satipattana meditation it means that we use sati or awareness as the lead in order to cultivate five qualities.

These five qualities are called the five faculties of mind. The five faculties are infinite awareness itself, sati; and then samadhi, we'll call it stability of mind; there's viriya, we'll call it right effort; there's saddha, which we'll call faith or confidence in yourself and the practice; and lastly wisdom which is called panna.

The word in Pali for meditation is bhavana which literally means "cultivation."

The reason why cultivation is important is because it is the nature of mind to arise and pass away every moment. The mind is discrete. It arises and passes away. But what it leaves is a legacy for the next mind that will arise. So cultivation of the right things is important so the right legacy is passed on.

So whatever you allow to live and grow in your mind, whether that quality is positive or negative, will, as you allow it to remain in the mind, grow strong and stronger because that legacy is being passed on.

That is why if we want to cultivate meditation, if we want that to grow, we have practice nonstop.

Meditation is not a part-time occupation. It's not a pastime. It's something we need to integrate into our lives so that it is always there. Because the mind is like a zero-sum game. It's either positive or negative.

We need to try to make what's in the mind every moment be something positive, because if it's not positive its going to be negative. In other words, something skillful, because otherwise it will be unskillful.

This is the nature of meditation, this need for how you cultivate. He's trying to bring this to life for you because the time for meditation is all day long, from the moment you wake up and open your eyes, until you fall asleep at night. Every moment is time to meditate.

So he's going to give you a few pointers, what he feels is most important for the practice of meditation.

The meditating mind, the mind that is doing the work of meditation, that mind needs to be a wholesome mind.

What do we mean by wholesome mind? Remember the five faculties I mentioned earlier, awareness, stability of mind, right effort, faith and confidence, and wisdom. Those are the qualities of mind and this is what we are trying to cultivate. Every moment of awareness brings these qualities of mind into the present moment.

Of these five qualities, it's when we try to make effort that often, or sometimes, defilements come in and it becomes wrong effort.

So if greed comes into the practice, it becomes wrong practice. If aversion is the motivation for practice, it becomes wrong practice. If delusion is what's present when we are practicing, it becomes wrong practice, wrong effort.

Whenever these defilements are present and motivating the practice we begin to over-exert, we begin to over-effort.

When we are striving for something, when we want something to be a certain way we start to put in too much effort. When we are dissatisfied with something we start to put in a lot of effort. When we don't know what to do we start to sort of flail about in the dark and then we still exert too much effort.

When there's not enough wisdom or understanding about how to practice correctly, what right effort is, when there's not that understanding, then there will be this sometimes too much efforting and sometimes not enough effort.

Sayadaw wants us to be particularly aware of how much effort we are putting into the practice. He is very concerned we do not over-effort. He doesn't want us to be focusing too much or trying too hard.

He doesn't want us to practice in a way that makes the mind or the body tired. When you practice meditation do you think it will make you peaceful or happy? Will it make you tired and unhappy?

If you are practicing correctly, with right effort, it will definitely bring peace and joy. But if we are putting in wrong effort, yes we will find we are getting tired as we are practicing. We will be unhappy while practicing.

The moment there are things that we want, things that we want to have, things we don't want, we don't like, we disagree with, then it begins. We start to get tired in our practice.

Simple awareness itself isn't tiring at all. All it is, is not forgetting in the present moment, to be aware.

It's easy to be aware, because all we can be truly aware of is our six senses. What we can directly be aware of.

We have six sense doors. If we are aware of one or the other of the six sense doors, and what we are experiencing through it, then awareness is present.

So to be aware of yourself, how much effort do you think it requires?

Let's try it out. Live demonstration, ourselves as guinea pigs. You are sitting. Are you aware you are sitting? Hmm? Feeling seated?

You are seeing. Are you aware that you are seeing? Yes? Are you sure?

When did you begin noticing that you are seeing? That seeing is happening? Just now? Just when Sayadaw reminded you. Then it was "oh, yeah ..."

But every day we wake up, we open our eyes and the first thing that happens is seeing beings to happen. Do we ever realize that? That is what awareness is, just this realization of our present moment experience. That's all.

So how much effort did you need to recognize that you were seeing, when he said so? Much? A lot? No?

Do you need to concentrate to know that you are seeing? No.

So what he is trying to demonstrate to you is that awareness doesn't take a lot of effort. So long as you are aware of something in your being, some sense, you are aware. It doesn't just have to be seeing, it can be any of the other senses, touching, etc.

Of the six senses, five are in the body, one of them is the mind. That's also something that you might know. Tasting, hearing, smelling, all of that. Whatever you know is fine.

He does want you to be meditating all day long. So it won't do to put in too much effort in bursts of effort, because you will run out of steam. He wants you to conserve energy so you keep going all day long.

He also wants us to lose the idea that meditation happens on a cushion or in the dhamma hall. He wants us to come to the idea that meditation is so important we need to do it whenever we remember to do it, all the time.

So although we don't need to put in a lot of effort to be aware in each moment, what is very important is that we keep trying to keep up the intention to remain aware all the time, whether it's continuous or not.

So that is the definition of right effort. Not the putting in of a lot of energy, rather the sustaining of that little bit of energy and trying to keep it going, trying to keep up the intention and the commitment and not giving up. Persevering throughout the day.

That's actually a bit harder, Sayadaw says, because in order for awareness to become constant it needs to become our habit. For something to become our habit we sort of have to pick at it all the time.

If we do persevere and we keep at it, and keep at it, a momentum will build and we will notice it starts to take on a life of its own. It starts to grow and that momentum is very important.

Without this momentum, Sayadaw says, it becomes difficult to take the practice to very much higher levels.

Sayadaw says, in the beginning it is always our personal effort, that is always on and off, on and off, and we just persevere. When we remember we keep going. We forget, we remember, keep going. Then, when that momentum builds up, you will start to notice that awareness starts to kick in on its own. That's when the flow comes in. If you practice like this over a long time it can get to the point that that natural sort of awareness isn't just kicking in once in a while, and not just for short periods, it can start to become very pervasive.

When it gets to that point, where it feels pervasive, you can really feel how it is not you practicing any more, the dhamma is around.

That's when the understanding of anatta, the idea of what anatta could be, becomes very strong.

That's why Sayadaw says continuity or at least the intention the commitment too keep it that way, is so very very important in the practice, in right effort.

Remember, it's not about using a lot of effort, it's about being steady. Steady and keep going and going.

In order to ensure that we are practicing with right effort and right attitude, Sayadaw says another thing we need to do is check in with our minds every now and then to see whether it has right attitude, whether it is making right effort. Whether some greed or some aversion or delusion is there, pushing your practice. Check in very often.

Because the nature of our minds is that as we live our lives, most often greed takes over, aversion takes over, delusion takes over, and we are going through all of our motions in daily life with these motivations. So it's not a surprise that when you come to meditate they will come and try to run the show there too.

Because what he is advocating is that we practice relentlessly, if any of this wrong stuff comes in—greed, aversion, delusion—then it's scary because it will be relentlessly greedy, averse or deluded.

Please check your mind often. When we are practicing we need to always remember, when we are practicing there are two things that are involved: the things that we know, and the mind that is knowing or trying to know.

Those things that we know, you remember the six sense doors we talked about just now, we call them objects. In general we call the thing that is being known, an object. It is called an object because its role is to be known.

What is being known, that object could be something in the body or something in the mind. But if we are talking about that which is knowing, that's just the mind. The body doesn't know. Only the mind knows.

The actual work of meditation, although it uses the object, the work is being done by the mind that knows. Meditation is the work of the mind.

The objects are already there. Whether we know them or not they are always present so we don't have to do anything to them. When we know something we don't have to change it, make it better, it doesn't have to be anything other than what it is. The object is just what it is. What we have to work with is that mind that is knowing.

In the present moment, whatever we know, whatever we can be aware of, it's an effect of the accumulation of past causes. Many causes come together to bring the present moment into condition. Because it's an effect we cannot actually change it.

What we can do in the present moment is work with the mind that knows. We can make sure it has the right attitude, that it is working in the right way. We can bring those qualities of mind to bear in the present moment by being aware and cultivate those good qualities.

First off, in the present moment, the first thing that we can do is check whether there is right view.

There we come to the fact that awareness alone is not enough. To practice vipassana effectively right view must practice together with awareness.

Wrong view is always at work. Our automatic view of our world is that this process of mind and matter is "me." I'm looking at me. I know me. But we can't practice vipassana using that point of view.

If we think of the body or the mind as "me," and we observe it, defilements will begin arising. We will attach to things that we experience and are observing, we will resist the things that we are observing. If we think this is a good experience we will start wanting it, or trying to create it. If we think it's not a good experience we will start denying it or pushing it away.

The mind is the worst. The moment we think it's not a good mind, hell starts.

Looking at the mind doesn't bring good news. (chuckle)

It's odd, when we look at our minds, mostly we see a lot of negative stuff running around. If we think it is "my" mind, we will start feeling pretty depressed. And if we think we have good qualities of mind, we start feeling good. That's mana, pride.

So to practice vipassana effectively then, we have to remind ourselves that these minds, these process, are also nature. So that we can observe them. When you observe yourself, this whole process of mind and matter, you want to remind yourself that the "me" is actually a process of mind and matter coming together. We want to understand that process and that's why we are observing it.

That's one very important thing to have, right view, when we practice.

There are other ways that right view can come in and that's when we practice vipassana, we are trying to observe what is happening as it is, not resisting anything. Not judging what's happening.

When practicing, three of the bugbears for yogis, where our wrong view comes in and starts working are 1) Sound, 2) Thinking mind, and 3) Pain. How should we approach these three experiences? What should our thoughts be about them? These are the main bugbears but they are not the only ones. We could have similar ideas about any of our experiences.

Sayadaw is trying to bring to life this idea of how, when we consciously or unconsciously begin to judge something as good or bad, as an experience, we are going to be trying to manipulate it. But in nature, things such as nature, they are what they are. They are neither good nor bad, they are just what they are.

So when we meditate is it good to have thinking mind, or is it good to have less thinking mind?

If we think it's better to have less thinking, then when we think there is more thinking than there should be, we will start resisting it. We will start making an effort to do something about it.

And as you go about meditating the whole day, is it good to hear sounds? Are loud sounds better for meditation or are soft sounds better for meditation? Is it better if it is quiet for meditation? Don't we all like quiet better? But do you know what happens when we think quiet is better than when it is noisy? We get just a little bit annoyed.

It doesn't matter how concentrated you are, you could be like in the depths of concentration, if you hear a sound and you think there shouldn't be sound, instantly you lose it. Our preferences will hinder the mind's work.

If we have the right idea, it can help us. If we have the right idea the mind will remain stable and steady. If we have the wrong idea then we will get sort of destabilized.

In Pali it says the proximate cause of wholesome mind, of kusala, is yoniso manasikara. I have always translated yoniso manasikara as "right attitude." In Burmese it is translated as "taking to heart in the right way." So the proximate cause of kusala, wholesome mind, is yoniso manasikara. Correspondingly, the proximate cause of akusala, unwholesome mind, is ayoniso manasikara, "taking to heart in the wrong way."

Samadhi very often mostly translated as "concentration," we call it stability of mind. But samadhi is a good state of mind. It is a kusala mind which means that the proximate cause of samadhi is yoniso manasikara, "taking to heart in the right way."

The moment we have wrong view we have wrong thought. If we think in that way, the samadhi will be destabilized. The stability of mind will slip.

And how do we view pain? Do we think pain is good or not good? Generally we think pain is a negative experience in life. It's a discomfort. The word itself feeds that image into our mind and so when we have pain, the mind's automatic reaction, whether we are conscious of it or not, is actually to not like it.

So when we do meditation and we come across discomfort in the body, or the mind, we need to check, to see this negative reaction the mind has toward this experience, and adjust it.

We need to remind ourselves that pain is not just a negative experience, pain is nature. We have a body. If we put it in positions that are difficult for it, if we remain in these positions for a long period of time, it will bring discomfort. That's natural. So pain also comes from a set of conditions. It's an effect of some causes coming together. If we see this as a process we see pain is just what it is, it's neither good nor bad.

It's only when we can accept that it is nature that we can allow it and learn from it. Otherwise we are so busy resisting pain we can't understand anything about its nature or its process.

As we go about meditating the whole day, whatever we are observing, whether it's in the body or the mind, remember we are holding the view that this is just nature, this is just a process. That's the only difference between someone who is trying to meditate, a yogi, and someone who is not trying to meditate, who is not a yogi.

A yogi is one who uses all the experiences of the six sense doors to develop sati, samadhi and panna—awareness, stability of mind, and wisdom.

But if you are not a yogi, you still have the six senses, you still experience through the six sense doors but you develop greed, aversion and delusion towards them, or because of them.

If we have the knowledge, if we have the right information, we can use these six sense doors and the experiences of them to develop our good qualities of mind. It becomes meditation. You are all yogis, right?

So use the six sense doors, use every moment you have with the six sense doors to develop awareness, stability of mind and wisdom and you'll be yogis.

There is no experience in the world that disturbs you—you concentration or your awareness. For a vipassana yogi every experience and every object never hinders the practice. They only support the practice because it's something you can be aware of and therefore you can develop stability of mind and wisdom.

When we talk about defilements we are talking about hindrances. When we say hindrance, hindrances are not the thing we experience, not the object. It's in the mind that is meditating. If there is greed or aversion in the mind when we practice, if the mind is averse to what is being experienced, or greed or delusion, that is the hindrance, not the experience itself. Having anger is not the defilement or the hindrance. If we are resistant to the anger, that resistance is the defilement in the practice. Does that make sense?

But when you understand the practice then you can take the resistance in the mind, and observe that as well, and then it becomes an object and it's not a hindrance any more. It becomes part of the practice.

In the Satipattana Sutta you have body consciousness, feeling consciousness, mind consciousness and dhamma consciousness. When we get to dhamma consciousness then the hindrances become the objects.

Sayadaw has covered everything he needs to about the attitude to meditation, and our job henceforth is only three: First, have right view, second, be aware of right view, third, continue to be aware of right view.

That one always makes people laugh. There's not a lot to do, just these three.

So when you do want to do a sitting meditation, whether it is in the hall or out there in nature, or in your room, when you are sitting, Sayadaw says, you can be aware of anything in your body, or something that is happening in the mind, anything in mind. You can start with your breath if that is what you usually do, you can do rising and falling if that's what you do, or body-scanning or whatever you like.

But he wants you to know that when awareness gets better what happens is that awareness knows more. So there is no need to try to keep the mind on only one object. Don't become blinkered and obsessed with one object.

So you can start with one object because that's a beginning. But if you begin to find as you continue to be aware that other things are filtering into your awareness and you

know other things, please allow yourself to know these things and to acknowledge them.

You might find that you are watching your breath, and then you notice the mind is thinking, you also notice some heat in the body. It just means that awareness is getting better. It doesn't mean you are getting distracted. The more you are aware of, the more it is a sign that your awareness is expanding and you know more. It means the ability of the mind to know is increasing.

The whole objective of meditation is not to quiet the mind. The objective of the meditation is to know. To know whatever is happening as it is. If it is quiet, then it's quiet. If it's not quiet, it's not quiet. Just know that.

Acknowledging what you are experiencing in the moment, whatever you experience in the moment, acknowledge it for what it is, whatever you notice of your experience in the moment, acknowledging it for what it is. And letting yourself continue to know that and what else you could know. You are not trying to change your experience.

What are we doing as we wander around throughout the day, sitting, standing, whatever. We are trying to know, being aware of whatever is happening in the body and the mind. So if in any moment you begin to feel that you are knowing three or four different things at a time, it can grow into that, don't be alarmed. Don't think you are distracted. Don't judge it. Just know that is a good sign.

When Sayadaw uses the word "wandering mind" it just means you are unconscious. You don't know you were lost in thought. That's when there is wandering mind. But if you are thinking and you are know there is thinking, that's not wandering mind, that's when you are aware there is thinking mind. When awareness expands it becomes really good that you know a lot of things. A lot of things are happening, you know it clearly and it is really fast.

The mind and the process of mind and matter is really, really fast. We don't usually see at that speed, but when awareness becomes really good it can see that speed.

When there are thoughts, please don't fight them. Thoughts are nature. The nature of the mind is to think. One of the definitions of the mind is "that which thinks is mind." So what matters is for us to acknowledge if we know there this thinking mind, there is thinking mind.

Don't be interested in the story, what you are thinking about, but rather in the fact that the mind is thinking. It's a process that is happening. At the beginning, if you are not used to acknowledging the mind is thinking, go back to whatever else you were being aware of. Don't stay just with the mind, you can then get lost in thought.

But if we give ourselves the opportunity to acknowledge the thinking mind often, we will get to the point where we begin to see that this is mind. Then you can know it and not get lost in thought.

That happens only when we begin to know that we can objectively know that this is mind. Realize this is mind, mind is thinking, and then you don't get lost in thought. It won't happen.

Remember that when you do have discomfort, whether physical or mental, the first thing to check for is whether there is resistance in the mind. What is the reaction of the mind to the experience of discomfort? And there are two steps there, you check for the reaction of the mind and you see, one, whether you can adjust it. Can you remind the mind that this is nature? Does it then become more accepting so you can observe?

Step Two, you watch as long as you are able. If it becomes very uncomfortable, stop doing that. Do something that is more neutral, go to the breath or take a walk. Don't work with something very difficult for longer than you can bear. If it was a sitting posture and you have a lot of pain, change the posture.

When you do walking meditation, just walk and know that you are walking. You don't need to walk slowly, there's no need to label what you are doing. Just know you are walking. Become conscious of the forces of walking. What can you pick up about the process of walking as you watch yourself walk? You can start by knowing just one thing, just maybe feeling the step, or the movement.

The key is to sustain the awareness. Keeping aware of that one thing that you know, the movement or whatever, you'll find the awareness begins to expand and know what else is happening when you are walking.

Be aware in all of our activities, in our rooms, when we eat, when we move a hand or a leg. When we look, to pick things up, when we see in general. Notice these things as much as we can. In seeing and looking we most lack practice, so we will find we are not very skillful, we maybe won't remember to notice. We are so used to thinking that meditation has something to do with our eyes closed that we are not used to the idea that you could be aware of seeing, or with your eyes open you can be aware.

It is really not difficult. You are looking, and you can recognize that looking is happening. That action is happening. How many times a day do you think that we do this? We look. How many times a day do we look? So please practice, if you practice and make it a habit it is everywhere, it is pervasive. Every time we do something we look.

Before we turn the handle we look at the handle. We look at the door before we go towards it. We look at something before we pick it up, before we choose something, before we do anything. If we aren't skillful at noticing seeing and looking, it is difficult to keep up practice in daily life because we don't walk around all day long with our eyes

closed. Seeing is a very, very obvious object. We can't even not want to see. With our eyes open, seeing is happening.

We tend to not be able to understand what seeing is. The instant tendency of the mind is to then think of what it is seeing—I see a Buddha picture, I see the floor. But that is not the object. Those things are there that you are seeing are objects. The vision, the seeing, that's a different thing. Just acknowledge what you are seeing.

Seeing and thinking have similar natures. It's like when we watch our thoughts we get lost in thought, and so when we try to notice seeing we get lost in what we are seeing.

Only with repeated practice, perseverance, we become able to objectify so we don't get lost in it. So particularly as we go about the day, not when we are in sitting meditation or doing walking meditation, doing our other day-to-day things, please make yourself conscious of seeing and looking as much as possible. Remind yourself.

And in the beginning days of meditation, please do not speak if not necessary, just to get some momentum. In the later days, at some point, we will practice talking with mindfulness, a little bit. That's enough. Any questions? Did you find any of this confusing or disjointed? This is the time to ask questions.

YOGI: You said something about the difference between the body and the mind?

SUT: I'll just explain, it's sort of technical. In the Buddhist Abhidhamma, in the psychology of Buddhism, things are clearly defined. So although in English we may say "the body knows and it's adjusting," like that. We use the words quite loosely, I'll say. But in Buddhism it is very clearly spelled out that it's always the mind that knows. You may not be conscious of it, but the subconscious mind might be aware of something that is happening in the body. So whatever is known, is always known by the mind. If it is something that knows, it is the mind that is knowing. This is technical. It is also the mind that feels. For example, one of the physical senses is sound. Sound is an object, a sense object. And the hearing is the experience of sound. But sound is not the mind. If you are talking about the body, feeling in the body, there might be heat. Heat is not the mind, but the knowing of heat is the mind. In Buddhist terms that which knows, and that which thinks, is defined as mind. It's a definition. You call any quality that knows, the mind, and any quality that feels, the mind, and any quality that thinks, the mind. As you practice you will begin to see the difference between what is known and what is knowing. That which is being known has the nature of being the object, of being known; and then that which is knowing, which is always mind. You will begin to see this difference clearly.

YOGI: (Inaudible)

SUT: The question was, there is a very subtle difference between cultivating good qualities of mind, and allowing what is manifesting to be there. Allowing what is being experienced to be there and not trying to change it. The little bridge between these two

is the word acceptance, which can be misunderstood. We often think that accepting something means surrendering to it. If there is anger in the mind, "Oh, I accept it so let my mind be angry." But that's not what it is. There is some extent to which you can't help but roll with it, because it has its momentum and you can't stop it. But what you are not doing in the present moment is feeding it. You accept that this is what is happening, but then you will do what you need to do, with awareness, you are going to be aware. You are not feeding it, you are not thinking more about what is making you angry, you are not making yourself more angry, you are trying to become aware, moment by moment. "There is anger, this is anger, this is the nature of anger. What is that like?" And you are bringing that awareness continually. You are not working at being angry you are working at being aware. So that has to become very conscious, that awareness is at work. That is the good quality that you are cultivating. So you are cultivating awareness, not anger any more, although anger will have its momentum. Don't let it eat you. When we say "accept what is happening," we are saying you are not needing to say to yourself, "I shouldn't be angry, I shouldn't be angry." Accepting is, "oh, there is anger," and then there is awareness, and awareness is where you put your energy. You put all your energy into awareness. Awareness, awareness, awareness.

YOGI: Can Sayadaw say something about how to practice while lying down?

SUT: You are allowed to practice in any posture, so certainly you are allowed to practice lying down. Just don't fall asleep. If you find your awareness is good lying down, then you are welcome to do that. When we lie down we have to be mentally alert, we have to exercise the mind more. When we lie down the mind doesn't have to support the body in postures, so all the effort has to be geared towards being aware. If we become too relaxed when we are being mindful in a lying down posture, we can fall asleep.

YOGI: It still seems difficult that even if you are aware of the process of thinking, to dissociate the sense of self from it.

SUT: There is no need to dissociate because it's about knowing what is happening in the present moment as it is. So you know there is thinking, and you know the sense of "I." Know that as well, recognize both. Because you are aware you are on top of both. That's fine. The benefit of that is that when sometimes the sense of "I" is not present, you then recognize it so clearly, because you have been recognizing it when it is there.

YOGI: Can there be awareness of awareness?

SUT: Yes there can be. When there is momentum, when the awareness is good, there can be awareness of awareness. I often give an analogy, every moment that we are aware is like putting dots down in a line. So a moment of awareness ... dot ... awareness ... dot ... awareness ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot ... dot. When you have a lot of dots you begin to see the line. That's what it feels like when you are continuously aware, suddenly this thing that is awareness seems to come alive in your consciousness. You begin to see this thing at work. You can step back from it and that's awareness of awareness.

YOGI: What is the instruction for chronic pain?

SUT: If it's chronic you really have to work to understand it, the process of pain, really well. When we truly understand what pain is, then when there is the experience of pain, then aversion doesn't come with it. When we understand that pain is also the dhamma, that is also a dhamma object, then pain is just another object, it doesn't matter. When pain becomes dhamma, then it is no longer painful. And for yogis who don't have chronic pain, we challenge ourselves to face pain, discomfort and so on, so we begin to understand the nature of pain. So that if we have real pain, we have some understanding and can face it with more equanimity. For those with chronic pain, you have to learn on the go. What is the mind's feeling towards the pain? What is the mind's attitude toward the pain? What stance does it hold to the pain, towards the pain you have? What do you already understand about your pain? You need to bring all this. When we observe pain it is so that we begin to understand the process of pain, not just in the body but how the mind is involved in the experience of pain. It is to understand this process that we observe the whole process of pain. When there is pain, pain is just a physical experience, right? But the feeling, "painful," is in the mind and the only difference in experiencing pain is whether you find it painful. There is aversion in the mind towards it, or the mind is equanimous towards it, although the physical experience is still there. So you need to work with the mind to understand how the mind is involved in the process more. How does the mind interpret pain? How does the mind create pain for itself? How does it create the experience of pain, "painfulness," and all the attendant pains for itself? So a normal person it's all together, it's all rolled up in one. But for a yogi it's different, you are starting to take it apart, find out more about it.

DAY 2—"SEE IF YOU CAN BE SIMPLE AND JUST KNOW"

Just continue your meditation.

You don't need to try and listen, just pay attention to your own objects whatever they may be, and you will hear what needs to be heard.

Without looking, although we don't try to look, seeing still happens as long as our eyes are open. Similarly, we don't have to listen, hearing will still happen.

Even if we don't pay very close attention we can still know whatever is going on.

Remember that it's in the mind that is meditating, in the way you are aware, that there needs to be wholesome qualities.

If you can, if you see wanting and dissatisfaction in the way that you are trying to be aware, let it go if you can. See if you can just be simple and just know.

That awareness can be quiet and calm, and yet alert and interested in what it knows.

Are you clear about what you are aware of? Is there a clear feeling of knowing?

Let the experiences come as they may, whatever happens in the body and the mind that you are knowing. Let it be, as it is.

Notice the difference between what is known and what is being known—notice they have different roles and different natures. To know versus to be known.

The object shows its nature, so you don't need to control it or manipulate it. It doesn't have to be anything other than what it is because that is its nature. You just observe it.

That observing needs to have right view and to be persistent. It needs to keep observing.

Don't have trouble with what you are experiencing. Don't complain about experience, appreciate that it can be known. Appreciate awareness every moment.

What is our endeavor? It is to know, to be aware, to awaken.

Every moment that we bring awareness to life, weakens the darkness of delusion.

You can recognize how you feel. It's good to check in with how you are feeling every now and then. How do you feel?

Are you being aware or are you just thinking?

Don't forget to always meditate, to always be in meditation, every moment there is room for awareness. Not just when you sit. Every moment, this is critical. This is because the continuity of awareness is so important, as much as you can muster, it is so important.

Whatever you do, know yourself and do it, know your action as you do it, know how you feel as you do it.

Take the dhamma seriously. Practice it with dedication.

DAY 3—*"THOUGHTS ARE NOT A PROBLEM"*

Keep practicing.

Keep the body and the mind relaxed. Let them relax.

Check your attitude. Are there any expectations? Anything the mind thinks or prefers, wants or thinks is better?

What does the mind know now? What is the mind doing now?

Thoughts are nature. Thoughts are a process of mind. We should recognize thoughts, acknowledge them. Thoughts are not a problem. It's important to recognize thoughts.

The stories of our thoughts are just concepts. They are not what we are. Thoughts are happening in the present moment. The mind is thinking in the present moment. That is what we want to know.

Thoughts may be about things in the past or things in the future. But that's not so important. In the present moment, what's happening is the mind is thinking. It's not the story in the present moment, it's just the mind that is thinking.

The mind is thinking. If you know that, that is good enough. There are thoughts. If you know that, that is good enough.

Thoughts are another process of mind and another object that can be known. That is all.

There are good sensations, bad sensations, pleasant feelings and unpleasant feelings. For us they are just objects, they are something that we know, something we are aware of.

Whatever is happening that you are aware of, let it happen. What you want to recognize is that you know it's happening because you are aware. You want to appreciate the presence of the awareness, that the awareness made it possible for you to know what's happening. Appreciate that. Value that awareness above all else.

Awareness fulfills two functions while it's at work. Every moment of awareness is a moment that gathers more information. The awareness is also cultivating itself, building its own momentum so that it becomes a stronger quality in the mind.

Don't get so into the object that you forget the awareness that is enabling you to know that object. We can get obsessed with the object, we can get very close to it and think that is all there is to know. Don't forget the awareness.

Is the mind aware? Is there interest?

So long as the mind is working with awareness, not just with awareness but right effort, stability of mind, confidence and wisdom. So long as all these qualities are at work in the mind continuously, the mind will get stronger and stronger. Those qualities will get stronger.

If the mind is peaceful, know that it is peaceful but be careful about indulging in the peacefulness, about just enjoying the peacefulness, not wallowing in the peacefulness. If we are lost in the peacefulness then right effort starts to slip away and diminish. Gently slipping away.

The work of right effort is trying without stopping to continue to be aware. Trying without stopping.

At all times of the day, remember to attend to mindfulness, to do everything with awareness, to not only be mindful when you are in sitting meditation. Be mindful in all activities and all movements. In the dining hall continue to maintain awareness.

Practice wholeheartedly and sincerely. Apply yourself to the practice.

DAY 4—*"HOW SHALL WE OBSERVE THE MIND?"*

Keep going practicing.

Remember to check your attitude. We are not practicing to get something the way we think it should be or the way we want it to be. If things arise you wish weren't really there. This is not the practice for making those things go away. Just acknowledging what is happening as it is, recognizing what is happening as it is, that is awareness.

The Middle Way is the way of watching what is happening with wisdom. Meaning there is no preference, not seeking something good or pleasant or preferable. Not pushing away what we think is bad or unpleasant or undesirable. All of these are just objects, things to know, nature, their nature.

If we have a judgment that something is good, we attach to it and that's greed. If we think something is bad we resist it, that's aversion. When you are continuously aware, we call that watching, you are watching when you are continuously aware.

In trying to keep our awareness continuous, some of us watch the object closely, we try to ensure that the objects that we know don't disappear, that we don't run out of objects. While another way of trying to keep the awareness continuous is to try and ensure that the awareness doesn't stop. That we are checking to see that it is still present, alert and aware.

If a yogi is able to clearly differentiate object and knowing, clearly tune into their awareness versus the objects, that yogi should stay with the knowing, should take care of the awareness.

If the yogi is concerned with not running out of objects, then the yogi also comes up against the tendency to like and dislike, to have preferences for which objects he or she

would like to observe or have experiences of. But if a yogi is able to know awareness and maintain the awareness by keeping an eye out for whether awareness is still present, that yogi learns to become more and more skillful in understanding how awareness works.

The mind isn't located anywhere, it has no shape, no color, no way for us to perceive it with our physical senses. So how shall we observe the mind? Although there is no place where the mind resides or is, we can know the mind because we can know the mind is doing things.

For example when there is thinking, we can know that thoughts are arising, that thinking is happening. When we consciously think thoughts we can know that this is what the mind is doing, it is thinking through things.

When you pay attention to something, when you are aware of something, the mind's attention is directed to what you are aware of and you can know that, that the mind has directed attention.

When we are aware of a physical sensation we can know that the awareness is present, therefore you know the physical object. But to actually take that awareness as an object, that is a skill that not all of us have, become skillful at.

For those of us who feel our awareness has become pretty continuous, pretty stable, do you feel like the awareness has kind of come into relief? Do you feel like the awareness feels obvious to you? That it's presence is palpable? Something knows, something has this capacity to know, that is the mind.

In our thoughts there is sometimes wrong thought. These wrong thoughts get in the way of practice. They hinder the purity of awareness. But if there is right thought it supports right awareness.

Wrong thoughts means that the motivation for those thoughts is greed or aversion. So those thoughts will bely a preference or a resistance. Those are wrong thoughts. Whereas when there is wisdom, there is Right Understanding, there will be right thought.

Investigation is the process of wisdom in the thinking. Basically the nature of meditation is that wisdom is the goal, and wisdom needs to be invested, needs to be brought into the practice. But when investigating everything too much it can become tiring. Asking questions is really to bring some wisdom into the moment, some discernment. But if there is no wisdom behind the thinking that can be tiring.

When we are told that we can ask questions to investigate it doesn't mean we question things endlessly. If we find that a question interests us, that is enough. We don't need to ask any more questions.

When wisdom begins to work you begin to feel strong, confident, awake, alert, fresh.

A yogi just watching objects alone is not enough. There must also be a recognition of the mind that is doing the work of meditation. The qualities of the mind, like awareness, sati, the stability of mind, samadhi, the wisdom, panna, if they are working together steadily then sloth and torpor do not arise. We don't feel dull and sleepy.

Whatever you do, all the time, know yourself and what you are doing. Always double-check how are you being aware?

DAY 5—"CHOOSE HOW YOU WILL BE AWARE"

What is the mind knowing? Is awareness present in the mind?

When practicing vipassana the object should be left in its natural state. The object or the experience should be allowed to unfold naturally. The effort we put in is supposed to be directed towards the awareness. To be aware, to have Right View. And to keep it continuous.

We are not trying to change the object or the experience, what we are trying to work with is the mind that observes. And how do we work with it? By checking if there is Right View, bringing in Right View. And you work with it by keeping mindfulness continuous while you figure out how to adjust the mind that is observing. So the change if any needs to be in the mind that is observing.

All the experiences and objects in the present moment are the results of conditions in the past. You can't change results. What you can do is change your action in the present moment. Choose what you do, how you will be aware.

So for example if there is pain you don't try to change the pain. What you try to change is the aversion in the mind. And how do you do that? You do that by first changing the perspective, trying to bring in Right View. Changing the view to Right View, and then observing the aversion continuously. So, observing continuously with Right View. And if the aversion should go away, if the state of mind changes, you'll find the view of the mind towards the pain becomes different.

What we are learning is how to remain equanimous in the observing of states that might be considered good or pleasant, and equally states that might be considered bad or unpleasant.

How do we remain equanimous in the midst of experiencing pleasant, unpleasant, good or bad?

Actually, the objects themselves are just being their nature. The experiences are neither good nor bad. Good or bad are actually our opinion of them. If we think something is good we'll find it is pleasant. If we think something is bad we will find it unpleasant. So it is only with Right Thought and Right View that we are able to be unbiased in our opinion towards objects and experiences and remain equanimous in observing them. That is called the Middle Way.

Particularly when looking at our own minds, Right View is incredibly important. When we observe the defilements and wisdom is present, then they are seen to be just nature, natural qualities of mind. All experiences are just part of a natural process, part of the natural functions of the mind. So whether it is good or bad, just recognize this is one of the qualities that mind has. One of the natures that expresses itself.

When we have the Right Attitude towards it, see it for what it is, it becomes interesting to watch it act out its playing. In our lives our constant view has been to see this mind and this body as "mine." But when practicing vipassana we are changing this view, trying to remember the view that this mind-body process is just a process, not an entity.

The way you observe, the mind that observes, make it a habit of knowing it, getting to understand it, how it works. Check often. It will become easier to know it.

If the mind is sleepy and dull it's because the mind is not working. Wisdom is weak, effort is weak. When wisdom is weak, we need to take it out and use it. Think about how practice is done. Wisdom has to tell awareness what to do. Wisdom tells effort what to do.

We use all these skills situationally. We see when it is appropriate to use what. The correctly meditating mind is not cruising. It's alert, working, sensitive.

DAY 6—*"WE WILL SEE BOTH REALITY AND CONCEPTS"*

Examine your own aversions.

Wanting, not wanting, not satisfied. If we are thinking with these attitudes in mind something is going wrong.

When we are meditating, Right View is so important. Something arises in the body, something arises in the mind, know that this is just a process. It is nature, it is natural for these processes to take place.

Acknowledge what is happening as it is, just the fact of what is happening, that's all.

The difference between a yogi and someone who is not a yogi is just the attitude towards experience. Everything we see, hear, experience are objects and objects are supposed to support the development of awareness, samadhi and wisdom.

Any object, all objects, they support sati, samadhi and panna.

Someone who has Right View sees all experience as a stepping stone, not as hindrances.

Whatever you notice, seeing and hearing, acknowledge it, recognize it. It's strange, seeing is happening. Hearing just happens.

Something happens, you recognize it is happening. It stops happening, you recognize it has stopped. Don't go to the story, this person did that, they did this or the other, they shouldn't be.

It's just something you experience, you heard or saw. Hearing happened, seeing happened, that's all.

Ideally, recognition happens, awareness happens, understanding happens. Ideally we wouldn't be having a reaction, we wouldn't be having aversion or attachment. But aversion and attachment arise and then we should observe that, not get swept into its stream. Aversion and attachment, greed and aversion, they are universal qualities of mind, they are qualities that have their own unique characteristics. Our job is to watch them, this is your responsibility.

As objects arise, awareness knows them. If we recognize this time and time again, experiences happens, we know it, objects arise, we know them. We begin to realize we can't be without the objects because they are the reason we are aware. We can be aware of them.

It's only when there is sight that seeing can happen. It is only when there is sound that hearing can arise. As yogis we need to be interested in the nature of what is happening.

There is a noise, there is sound and hearing. That is the nature of what's happening. Don't think about the story and the context—"It's in the dhamma hall," "this person came in," "in the bedroom, that person did that." It's a sound, there is hearing, there is knowing, that is the nature. Only the nature.

Which is the dhamma? Hearing is the dhamma. Seeing is the dhamma. Not the people and places.

Knowing the sensations in the body is dhamma. So is seeing and hearing, that is also happening in the body. It's all dhamma. Dhamma is everywhere. What does that mean? Dhamma is everywhere only when the mind that is observing has dhamma in it and sees through the lens of the dhamma.

Wisdom understands the dhamma, the defilements only understand concepts.

Every defilement mind that arises has, as its object, a concept, a conceptual idea. But the object of the understanding mind, the object of the vipassana mind, is nature.

So at every sense door, awareness needs to be present whether we see or hear, taste, touch.

Awareness recognizes that experience of seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, etc. So it is not only observing the sensations in your body that make meditation happen. When you hear something, when you see something, we need to experience that if we are aware of that, that is also part of meditation. We need to practice recognizing that this is the practice also.

If the mind is ready and alert and awareness is always present, then any moment could trigger awareness, understanding or insight. The objects remain simple. It is still hearing, seeing, touching, smelling or whatever. But the understanding can become very deep. When the mind is pure, full of strength, take care of the quality of your mind. Every time defilements arise, be aware.

Watching yourself, what will you see? All you will see are things that you know, and the knowing.

You experience only the knowing and the known. Whether with reference to the object or the awareness, what is it like when it is personalized? And how is the experience different when it is not personalized? Find out.

We have six sense doors and sense objects that impinge on them, and we cannot remove or be free of them. We can't push aside these experiences, they are just part of your experience. But in experiencing what we do through the six sense doors, then if there was Right View, defilements would not arise. But if there is not Right View then defilements arise.

When we begin practicing we don't know the difference between concept and reality. But as we keep practicing and we hear about them, we will see both concept and reality, we will understand what is reality. And although we know the concepts, we choose to take the reality and know that. Not to the exclusion of the concept.

The concepts in general are like place, space, direction, name, shape, size, color, number—all these are concepts. Reality is just knowing and what is known. That's reality.

Reality is never still, it never stops. Reality is always new. There is never anything you experience in the moment that you have ever experienced before. It is always a new arising.

If we think of what is happening now as something that happened before, we are thinking of the concept of what is happening, we are not in touch with the reality of the fact of what is happening.

What you heard just now, just what you are hearing now, that's concept. If you've been listening since the beginning of this session, that's a concept. When you see every moment is new, every moment is fresh, every moment is changing, every moment is arising. That is reality, it's nature. You'll see that that's just nature.

When you think, "Oh, this is happening again," that's a concept. It gives rise to defilements. "Oh no, not again." But that's not reality. If we saw each moment was new we'd be really interested because we've never seen this before. This is real.

DAY 7—*"THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING IS TO KEEP THE MIND PURE"*

Appreciate the awareness that you have.

The nature of the mind is that when awareness is present, then understanding of whether something is suitable or not, beneficial or not, comes along. It starts to kick in once in a while.

The nature of this practice is so long as you are not searching for something, expecting something, i.e. greed is not operating in the practice, then the nature of the practice is that wisdom will begin operating.

When you find yourself interested while you observe some things, it means that wisdom is operating. Recognize that.

When your mind finds something interesting, recognize, we need to acknowledge that interest is present. And when there is no interest, we can also recognize that interest is not present.

When there is a defilement in the mind it can be difficult to feel interested in just the process, or to be interested in just the process.

If your mind is naturally inquisitive, you know in your daily life you tend to be someone who likes to sort out things, to figure things out for yourself. Then when you meditate you don't need to do much deliberative meditation, that natural quality of your mind will come out when it's necessary. Just be mindful.

But at times when the mind seems to be up against a wall, it's all fog, there is a lot of moha and you can't seem to see through anything, that's when you need to bring out a little bit of curiosity.

What is happening here? What am I not seeing? Bringing out those qualities of wisdom to help the mindfulness of the present moment.

Through all our experiences, all the objects that we know, the knowing is always new. Reality is always new, always arising.

But don't search for, or identify things, as arising and passing away, or coming and going. Just know what is happening in the present moment as it is.

Our individual ways of understanding principles, such as impermanence, is different. When the understanding strikes you, it may be an understanding that things change, it may be an understanding that things are always arising, or an understanding that things are always passing away. Or an understanding that things arise only to pass away.

But it is the understanding that we are talking about. It is not the experience of seeing something and saying something, "Oh this is coming and going," or "This is always coming," or "This is always going." It's not that. And understanding arises that this is the way things are.

Reality is never static, never constant, not still. It is always changing, constantly arising.

The key to understanding is just to keep the meditating mind pure, to not have greed, aversion or delusion in the way that you observe, so that then awareness, stability of mind and wisdom are arising in the meditating mind.

The mind that is observing usually sees the object that matches its level of purity or wisdom, or non-wisdom.

When the wisdom is strong enough, then it allows the mind to see more clearly, more detail, more cause and effect relationships, more connections. But this is when there is wisdom, not something to strive towards.

Again, a warning to watch out for ideas you might have of what understanding might be like or what you should be experiencing that will signify that you have understanding or momentum or whatever. Watch out for that tendency to believe that your idea of something is what must happen.

When you look for something it doesn't mean you will see it. And you don't see something just because you want to see it. It's when you are able to see it that you can see it.

In meditation we are not trying to see the objects, or to see the experience. We are building the natural ability of the mind to see for itself.

Progress in meditation is happening as long as you continue to practice. Progress only stops when we stop practicing.

DAY 8—*"RELAX AND LEARN"*

There is no way you can rush progress in meditation. We can only proceed steadily. But we don't stop either.

How much you do, how skillful you are, how much you are able to do, the benefits of that are already accruing, are already present.

When you understand this then the greed to get more, to do better, will not arise.

Be aware of the defilements. Right View and Right Thought about the defilements, and how you observe them, is very important.

The objective of observing is not to make defilements go away. We are observing to understand, not to fix it or solve it but to understand its nature.

We are studying the nature of the habits of these different qualities of mind—their function, the way they work. We are not observing the story they are perpetuating.

When we understand this process we see that sets of conditions come together and these different elements of mind and experiences come together, then arise and then disappear, they fall away. This is nature. This is what happens.

The process of cause and effect, these causes and conditions, when we see the causes and conditions that give rise to the effect, how that then together with other sets of conditions give rise to the next effect, it becomes clear there is a law in operation. It is the law of nature. It works on its own laws. There is nobody there.

For example we might say that we know something that's happening outside of ourselves, but the process that has actually happened is that the mind has directed its attention toward that concept, "outward."

The nature of the mind is it doesn't go anywhere, it doesn't move. The mind arises and then it disappears. It arises, exists, and disappears.

Every different function and quality of mind has its unique and specific characteristics and function. You could call it "personality." It all arises in the mind. They are all considered mind. And we can know these unique personalities, the characters. Usually we mistakenly personalize them, we believe that quality is "mine" or "me," that function is "mine" or "me."

For example, the quality of knowing just knows. The quality of perceiving just perceives. The volitional quality, that's what it does, it's like some pushing impulse. The quality that feels just feels. Nature means that each of these are doing their own work. They don't interfere in the other quality's functional work, they don't go in and do that job. They just do their own work.

The body has its specific and natural characteristics and the mind has its myriads of specific characteristics, its different natural functions.

Hardness is the quality of hardness, and softness is the quality of softness. Each has its own unique characteristics. Is it you?

In seeing, just seeing; in hearing, just hearing; in touching, just touching; There is mention of these things by the Buddha of this. What is meant by this?

It doesn't mean that you are seeing and you don't understand anything about it. It doesn't mean there is no meaning in your mind about it. It means that you know the nature of this phenomena and you understand what you need to understand about it, and it is just as it is. That because of that understanding, this phenomena is present, that greed, aversion and delusion are not arising.

When you begin to try to be aware of seeing, it's just trying to be aware that there is seeing. It's about the awareness, that you become conscious that you are seeing. Bring that consciousness in that, yes, seeing is happening.

When there is enough awareness of this, and the mind is ready, you will begin to understand the nature of this process. What is the object in the process of seeing, and what is the knowing, what is the relationship between them? How do they function together to bring about this experience of seeing? You begin to see the cause-effect relationship of that as well.

In seeing, both physical and mental processes are at work and working together. You begin to understand what seeing is, how seeing works, what the conditions and the effects are.

For understanding to arise, for these insights to arise, the mind has to have become more purified, there is less greed and aversion in the mind. For example, for greed, when you understand greed's nature, then greed diminishes.

If there is greed in the way you are observing, in the way you are observing, in how you are observing, then insight cannot arise, understanding cannot arise. That's why it's so important to watch and understand our greeds and our aversions, their qualities.

It's true the defilements are considered hindrances. But when you know about them, when you understand what makes them tick, then you can step over them.

Initially, as we contact objects and experiences, we will have wrong view. It will keep coming up, we will have aversion and greed in the way we watch and observe. But we will notice these, and this is our opportunity to watch them, to learn how they operate over and over. Then the understanding helps greed and aversion to diminish and the view to become more pure.

That learning process can only happen at its own pace. You can relax and learn. You can't rush it. Can't panic through it. Just maintain your interest.

When there is less greed, aversion and delusion in the way we observe, our view becomes different. It seems like the scenery changes, like the experiences are different. But it's just the mind that is different. You'll be surprised, you'll be amazed. But it won't last long because the defilements come back. They are still very skillful, we don't understand them fully yet. They've been messing with this mind, running the show for so long, they are not going to give up easily.

It's only appropriate that this practice needs to be relentless to at least try to catch up with the defilements before trying to overtake them.

Don't worry about practice because you'll be doing it until the day you die.

So practice continuously and diligently. At least the intention is there.

DAY 9—*"WISDOM'S NATURE IS CLARITY AND CERTAINTY"*

Let the objects be as they are.

What's important is for the mind that is observing to have right view, to have awareness, and to do both continuously.

The objects consist of both the conceptual reality and the ultimate realities.

When the mind is having defilements, it means that a lot of concepts are being observed, are being taken into consideration. Whereas, when you feel there is wisdom in the mind, it means that wisdom is understanding the realities in what is being experienced. The ultimate realities, more of them than the conceptual realities.

When a defilement is operating, check to see what that defilement is doing, what does the mind do when the defilement is operating, what are the thoughts like? These are the realities of that defilement. Very often when we have defilements, we blame the conceptual trigger, the external object, person or situation for the defilement. While in fact whenever this mind is suffering, whenever this mind is in turmoil or chaos, the indication is actually that there is a weakness in this mind, there is a lack of understanding.

When there is not enough wisdom the mind is more involved with conceptual realities and defilements will arise. So it is because of the delusion of this mind that this mind suffers. So we practice in order to increase the opportunities for wisdom to arise, in order that this mind has less and less delusion as a consequence. So long as the mind understands the ultimate reality of what is happening, the principles and laws of what is at work, then defilements will not arise.

Nobody outside of this mind can upset it, irritate it, make it angry, averse, afraid, happy, joyful or grateful. Nobody outside of the mind triggers it. The mind is responsible for its own feelings, gladness and suffering. So whenever this mind is suffering, and whenever the mind is happy, investigate: What is it in the mind that has brought about the current condition?

Thoughts cannot just be believed. Don't trust everything thoughts present to you. You need to check the motivation behind thoughts, it can be wholesome and wise, and equally it could be something unwholesome. But only you can know for yourself by checking. But the mind works very fast and sometimes you'll find the motivations are mixed, both wholesome and unwholesome, threaded together.

Wisdom's nature is not to believe blindly but to be clear and sure. Clarity, clarity is the quality that wisdom has.

Certainty that there is awareness when there is awareness, that you are clearly conscious and aware of the awarenesses whenever they are there. And when they are not there, you know clearly, they are not there.

Knowing clearly, knowing detail, knowing differentiation, understanding clearly—these are the qualities of wisdom. Discernment. If you are wondering about it, that is delusion, not enough clarity.

When you know moments of awareness, actual awareness in the present moment with clarity, then when the awareness is stronger you feel it, you know it. When it is not as strong you know that too. When it is not there, you know it's not there—or was not there.

If you don't have that sort of clarity, never mind, just keep practicing. When there is not much clarity, just acknowledging there is not much clarity, that's Right View. There is no need to want to have more clarity, there is no need to get somewhere. Just being with and knowing the present moment as it is, is the practice. You build moments of this, and that is cultivation, continuing to recognize the experience as it is, not judging it for better or for worse, but just like that. No clarity now, next moment, next moment, next moment and so on.

When wisdom is present, wisdom knows what it needs to do. When there is not enough wisdom, greed tries to do what it thinks it should do in order to reach its objective. So greed's focus is on the goal while wisdom's focus is on the steps to be taken.

Wisdom has patience, greed has none.

Please make more right effort in increasing the continuity of awareness in your daily activities, particularly in the dining hall and whenever you are eating or drinking.

Also remember to notice seeing and looking, the awareness of it. Many defilements arise because of what we perceive through the eye sense door.

DAY 10—*"HOW AM I GOING TO LIVE TODAY?"*

Take interest in your own practice.

Life, in Pali, is "bhava," it means "becoming." The process of the mind coming into being, and passing away, and coming into being again, over and over, is this endless process we call life.

For the dhamma to be part of this life, every moment of becoming of the mind, every moment the mind comes into being, it must be a moment that coexists with wisdom, mindfulness. Then the dhamma is in life.

If we try to separate the dhamma from life, that doesn't work too well. In the practice there is the practice that you put in, and the effects of the practice. Whatever you put into the practice, you will get out of it.

Greed tends to be preoccupied with the effects, the results of the practice. Whereas wisdom sees the process that needs to take place, sees the steps that need to be taken, learns what is suitable in different situations to keep the dhamma alive.

Every morning when you wake up, you have to set the intention, how am I going to live today? How will I look after the mind? So you sort of clear the path, set the intention for how you are going to bring the dhamma into your life that day. Then we are more likely to put it into application, to actually follow the commitment, or fulfill the commitment. We need to have an objective every day when we wake up.

And we have to be willing to attempt to practice in every situation and environment, because in every situation and environment you will need different skills. You will need to learn new ways to be effectively mindful.

What is it like when you are alone, and what works to be mindful when you are alone? What is it like when you are with other people? What do you need to do, to be effectively mindful when you are with other people? When you understand and learn from trying in these situations over and over again, you will become more skillful.

It's important to be able to learn the skill of how to maintain stability of mind, and from there wisdom can grow further. First we learn the skill of how to just practice, and then wisdom develops. What we must remember is what that practice is like. How we practiced. What led to that insight? Not just moments before but the whole journey? When we become more skillful at remembering that and applying that, and we are getting more insights, we learn to use the insights we already have. We remember them and learn to remember they are there. After that, as those understandings also continue to grow, you begin to learn how to reach further than that. But all in good time. There is no need to think about it now. It will happen at that time.

It's like earning money. You first learn how to earn money. Then once you are earning money, you must know how to save the money, how to keep it with you, how to use it and not squander it. Then when you have saved quite a bit of money, you need to know how to grow your money. That's a different skill, investing it effectively.

For the dhamma to be growing, we have to be with it all the time. We not only have to maintain it to have insights, but we maintain it to keep the insights going. To keep them fresh and alive. The moment we stop having the dhamma in our lives, having it in our minds, then what we have learned starts fading little by little as well.

The benefits of the presence of awareness, and the fallout from the absence of awareness, we need to differentiate these. We need to recognize these in order to appreciate awareness better, mindfulness better, to appreciate its value.

Someone who understands how invaluable the dhamma is in learning how to live life skillfully and at ease, would never think of not having the dhamma in their lives. Most of us remember to apply mindfulness when we are suffering. The moment things get better, the mind feels more relaxed and we forget to continue to be mindful.

But if we don't want to be mindful in those times when we are relaxed, then the defilements are allowed to grow again and they will come again, with lots of strength and added force, and we get busy trying to clear those defilements again. We are in a cycle of trying to deal with these huge defilements when they hit us. Because we are never prepared, we don't maintain a steady practice that incrementally reduces the power of the defilements.

Whatever you try to fill up, if it is leaking why you are trying to fill it, it will never fill up. But if you can stop all the leaks, plug all those holes or gaps, then you can fill it up.

So what is the weakness in our lives? What are our biggest triggers? We start by noticing those and working with those and clearing those. And learning to maintain clarity after the fact, learning the skill of not allowing things to get to the point of being overwhelming. That is the practice of maintenance.

If we ask ourselves very simply, very honestly, just leave that door wide open and ask yourself, why is mindfulness not continuous in my life? Why does it not become natural?

It's because in a sense we want to have defilements in our lives. We want to live with them, we are used to them, we are comfortable with them.

But if we become able to learn and understand the benefits of the wholesome, and the non-benefits of the non-wholesome, not by judging but by truly understanding, then the mind will move towards more and more skillful states of mind and practices.

Wisdom has this interesting quality that it always sees both sides of a story. When it sees the benefits of something wisdom also sees that without it there would be the opposite—not just a lack of benefit but probably some trouble. That there is harm in the opposite.

Wakefulness means that wisdom is strong, awareness is present but wisdom is strong. When things change the mind is alert, wakeful and is able to learn lessons from these.

Notice just from this sitting, when you finish this session and you get up to go, the quality of mind changes. Look at the sense of commitment you have to being aware while you are sitting. Then you get up to go and why does it change? Are you carrying that same commitment with you, that same zeal to be mindful? The changes of the body postures should be unimportant. They are unimportant. This need to keep being mindful needs to stay with you.

When there is awareness and wisdom, the body may become tired but the mind does not become tired. But if there is no awareness or wisdom, then the mind also becomes tired because the defilements arise. Then the body is tired, there are reactions to what is happening and the mind gets tired. But when the dhamma is present you might even be ill and the mind develops awareness, stability of mind and wisdom instead of defilements.

Please put some vigor, commitment and zeal into awareness of daily activities. Detail and continuity.

DAY 11—*"WE PRACTICE HOW TO SPEAK WITHOUT DEFILEMENTS"*

Know both the objects and the meditating mind.

Notice what's happening in the mind, the workings of the mind. That's enough. If you are seeing it, it's enough.

When the mind is finding things interesting it means wisdom is already at work. When investigation happens you are not just thinking about things, you are being aware. Questions are asked to give some impetus, some power to the observation, some sense of purpose. But if there is already a strong sense of knowing and being in touch with your experience there is no need to ask questions.

When mindfulness is truly continuous, investigation is already a part of the process. Because the mindfulness is continuous the mindfulness will already have seen something that was brought to your attention, will already have noticed something that happened before, during and after.

It's important for the mind to be ready, to be alert and awake, continuously mindful.

It is also important to be relaxed which means the mind is not straining or striving because of greed.

The nature of the mind and the body, nama rupa, our view of them is to see their qualities, not to associate them with people, me, them or anyone. Just qualities.

When the mindfulness has gained momentum, sometimes see what happens when you stop trying to be aware. If there is momentum you will see the momentum carries the awareness forward still. The awareness is being aware of its own (sic), when there is momentum.

We tend to think of intention as "me." We tend to think of putting in energy as "my effort," "I am trying." But effort is not you, effort is a quality of the mind at work.

When you are doing something you can be aware you that you are doing something. So awareness and work can happen at the same time. Living with awareness means sitting with awareness, standing with awareness, going with awareness, working with awareness, while you are doing what you are doing. Don't let the awareness be forgotten.

You will still speak and think and do, but we need to practice to bring mindfulness into all these activities. To not let it be forgotten whether we are walking or sitting. Will the mind be in the same state? Will the same things be important for the mind?

When we are walking, the walking itself is happening, we don't need to be too concerned about that. We need to be concerned about how to be aware. The awareness is important whether we are doing work, or eating or drinking or whatever. How we are being aware, whether we are being aware, that's important to look out for.

If we think something is important, our mind's attention will be more with that. Thinking that something is important, our assumptions about it, we don't even realize we have assumptions about it, that's delusion. Understanding that something is important, that's wisdom.

When there is mindfulness, because we see what's happening we can learn from it and choose what adjustments need to be made. Most of you will have developed quite a bit of momentum, the practice must feel quite established to some degree. So from today, let's experiment with training at talking while being aware.

This is important in our lives because we need to communicate. With no mindfulness we are not skillful in our speech. Right Speech is a component of the Noble Eightfold Path. When we say the wrong things it brings a lot of agitation to the mind. When we say things we shouldn't have said, and the converse, when we don't say the things that we should say, there is agitation.

To recognize this and learn from it, mindfulness must be present.

When we speak, try to be mindful and aware. Slowly we will learn. Learning is the wisdom, one of the wisdoms.

When we speak too much, we are left agitated. When we don't say enough, we are left agitated. We need to know what is enough, what is necessary.

It's interesting to be mindful when we are speaking. So often we notice speech is happening with no sense of what is enough, we're just freewheeling, speech pops up and keeps going.

So to be mindful when we are talking we need to already have momentum before we begin talking. Then before we begin we can know what we want to say, how we feel. Then when we start speaking we can know the tone of our voice, what we are thinking of saying, how we feel, and that's not the only thing we can know when we are speaking.

If we have a strong desire to convey something, there is eagerness, there is a great desire to speak out, then we can get carried away by that thought and that speech. We need to be careful of that energy, watch it.

Why is it difficult to be mindful when we speak, or to continue to be mindful when we speak? It's because so many things are happening so quickly when we speak. We think about what to say, we have ideas feeding our feelings and our thoughts, and we are paying attention to the person we are speaking to.

These are all in the mix and it takes a lot of skill to just be and know whatever you know and not to get lost in all of that, and sucked into that process.

We tend also to pay a lot of attention to the person we are speaking to, instead of to ourselves. If we put too much attention in one place it will be taken away from another. If you put too much attention in the other person then there is not enough attention to yourself. So we need to build this skill of how we can speak and know that we are speaking and how we are speaking. That's possible if we are relaxed and not in a hurry to speak or convey.

There is something called force of habit, of circumstance or context. So if you are very diligent about being mindful every time you walk, every time you make a step, every time your feet moved, if you are very diligent about being mindful of that, you will find

that every time you start walking, awareness will pop up because that is what you are diligently trying to cultivate.

In the same way, if we always try to set up the intention to be mindful when we speak and we make the effort to be mindful again and again, eventually it comes to the point that when we speak, mindfulness is there.

Here on retreat we don't need to speak all day long. We don't want to lose the momentum of mindfulness if we are not skillful at being mindful of something we are doing, like talking. So although you can speak at any time of day, let's not speak for a long period of time any time we speak. So limit yourself to short little conversations, just to check in and to practice being mindful when you speak. Very short.

This is for training. This is to build habit. You are on retreat so there is no need to jump into conversation. Take it easy and slow. When you choose to speak with someone, both of you know your purpose so you can slow down, know what you want to say, know when you are speaking, take turns. If you speak about the dhamma and your practice, that also keeps you on practice, in the moment.

If you start speaking about yourself, be extra vigilant because we are most likely to get carried away when we speak about ourselves. The Buddha has said in the Satipattana Sutta that when you are silent, know that you are silent, and when you are speaking, know that you are speaking. We need to put this into practice.

If there is mindfulness throughout the time you are speaking, you will find that you feel good after that. And if you are mindful every time you speak, you will feel more confident and sure about yourself. Even if you make a mistake in speech, you will know it and learn a lesson from that immediately and decide how to do it next time, so that you are prepared.

If there is a lot of reaction in the mind, the mind is very agitated, it is better to not speak and just watch the agitation and the reaction and calm yourself down first. Because if we speak while we are reacting, the tendency is to just shoot our mouth off. So we are practicing how to speak only without defilement. That takes vigilance, wisdom, willingness. All this we will learn.

You can speak with metta, with karuna. It's not ideal to speak under the influence of the kilesas, under the influence of unwholesome minds.

So now is the chance on retreat to take it slow and see how it goes, so you get a taste and feel for doing it a measured pace. Then you can take that practice back with you into your lives.

We come on retreat to learn how to practice, how to meditate, how to be mindful. But the real place to put it into action, the real place that is useful and has benefit, is in our daily lives.

DAY 12—“OUR INTENTIONS HELP US TRANSITION WITH AWARENESS”

Do you now what's happening in the mind?

The mind has no place or shape but you can know the mind, you can know the mind is doing something, you can know something has come up in the mind. You can know the mind is knowing, you can know the mind is there, is present, you can know awareness is present, you can know the mind is feeling, you can know the mind is thinking.

You can know the mind has intentions, that the mind is intending.

Especially in our daily activities if we know our intentions it helps us transition with our awareness. It's easier to keep being mindful. It's not only when we move there are intentions. Intentions are not only to move, if we are not moving there are intentions.

Where your hands are placed now, why are they there? Because the intention for them to remain there is operating. Intentions are there throughout our body. For example, somebody is riding a bike. The bike is the body and the person is the mind. So for the bicycle to move, they move together. Same when it stops and is still.

When the mindfulness is better and you can see more subtle activities in the mind then you can detect the subtle energies and impulses that are constantly there, the intentions.

When we go from a position of stillness and we want to make a movement, the movement begins in the mind. The mind first knows that it wants to move in some part of the body. When the mindfulness is good and when you can see the intentions it brings a feeling of a great sense of continuity of awareness. Because the intentions help you, mental intentions always help the mind to transition the body from one posture to another, from one activity to another. So if you see the intentions there is a great feeling of continuity through the transitions.

When we are only paying attention to the body, we often lose mindfulness when we move the body, when we change what the body is doing. There is a slight break in awareness. All day long we are intending to look, intending to listen, intending to go, intending do.

Staying still, there is the intention to be still. There are continuous intentions to stay still. With the eyes closed there are continuous intentions to keep the eyes closed.

Continue to make the effort to bring mindfulness into every single activity, and into all your movements and moments of stillness. When you are quiet know you are quiet, when you are silent know you are silent, when you are speaking know that you are speaking.

DAY 13—“WE CAN BE MOVING AND STILL DEVELOP SAMADHI”

Notice the thoughts. You can know the sort of qualities that accompany the thoughts, whether they are wholesome or unwholesome. And whether what the mind is thinking of memories, thoughts of the past or the future.

You just need to know that this is mind thinking is happening now.

While there is thinking going on, what else is going in the mind? What other feelings associated with the thinking, what other mental activities, ideas and so on, feed into the thinking?

When we talk more, we find we have more thoughts after the fact. These thoughts need to be seen as objects. The thinking process.

That there is thinking, that there are thoughts, is not an indication whether the mind has samadhi or not. Just because the mind is thinking does not mean you have lost samadhi.

Samadhi is in the observing mind. It is able to watch steadily. That is samadhi. If you are able to maintain awareness it means there is samadhi.

In this next day the level of activity is going to start increasing. Probably it has already done so. You will find yourself planning more, deciding what to do. There is a lot of cleaning and packing to do. But remember no matter how much there is to get done, you only do things one at a time.

How do we go through this day without losing awareness? The mind's habit is to put all its attention outwards when there is something it feels needs to get done. Thinking about what to do and how to get it done—if we put too much energy into that we lose mindfulness. We can do it without losing mindfulness.

Whatever we do, we can know how we feel as we do it, the state of our mind, and what is happening in the mind as we do it. When there is not much to do we can take our time and do things at a very leisurely pace. If mentally we don't have that sense of hurry, if mentally we can relax and take things one at a time, then we can maintain awareness.

We have a choice of so many things to be aware of, that might be suitable for ourselves. We can be aware of the mind as we do what we do. We can be aware of the state of mind as we do things. We can be aware of the calmness or the steadiness of the mind as we do things. Our choice. We have to do this at home too. This is how we need to practice at home.

To only be able to practice and meditate when there is nothing else to do, when we are still, that's for beginners. As we gain ground in practice, we should aim to bring the

practice into all facets of our lives. To become skillful at maintaining awareness in every situation and context.

It is not only when the body is still and not moving that the mind can develop samadhi. We can be moving and still develop samadhi because samadhi is something that's developed through the activity of the mind, not the body.

A runner can have great samadhi. If the awareness is there, there will be samadhi.

When we have the right attitude and we are aware continuously, there will be samadhi no matter what work we do.

Let the mind and the body do what they do naturally. It just needs to be seen. That's all.

Take interest in the observing, how the mind is observing, how the mind is being aware.

The mind is able to know more objects when the awareness has gained momentum and the ability to know the mind has improved. There is no need to know a lot of objects, you just need to know the observing mind, the mind that is being aware.

When you go home, take home the skills of how to begin trying to be aware, and continuing to be aware, at home. To be steadily aware. Take that with you. If you lose all the mindfulness while still on retreat, that won't do.

DAY 14: "ARE YOU READY TO GO BACK?"

Are you ready to go back? Do you want to continue staying here or do you want to go home?

I would like to thank everyone who made this retreat possible, everyone who did all the organization, the managers, the people who worked behind the scenes way before this retreat began. I would like to thank everyone.

And I would like to thank you because you have practiced and I can see how enthusiastically you all practiced. I feel very encouraged by your practice and feel it has been very helpful.

I always tell yogis this at the end of every retreat: Delusion is very happy when we say the retreat is over. But although the retreat may be over we should not stop meditation.

Whenever I went home from going on retreat with my teacher, my teacher would always remind me to continue practicing at home. But I never did. At home it was home mind and I got lost in that. But every time I went on retreat I threw myself fully into the

practice. I was quite skillful at practicing and so when the time came that I needed to use it in my life, I was able to.

Life came to a state in which meditation was my last resort and I had to take it. When I began to meditate at home, I finally began to understand the nature of meditation.

The mind comes and goes, arises and passes away. I began to understand that if I wasn't constantly cultivating wholesome states of mind, then the unwholesome would slowly creep back in. If we reflect on our lives and how much of our lives we have let wholesome minds be inhabit us, versus how much time we are with unwholesome states of mind, the balance is often that, consciously or unconsciously, we have had more unwholesome states of mind than wholesome ones.

The mind is like a stream and mostly the stream is unwholesome.

Through the stream we attempt to row upstream and we have to row very hard. The moment we stop rowing we get swept downstream by the current again. Some of us have been practicing for a very long time but maybe we aren't getting as much from the practice as we could. Maybe we haven't changed as much as we could for the better.

We may still have our storehouse of a lot of aversion or greed or delusion. If that is so it is only because we haven't got to the point that we practice all of the time. If we could feel about meditation at home like we do on retreat, if we could bring home that same commitment to mindfulness, and sustain it, we would see big changes.

If we are always cultivating mindfulness then the wholesome will grow. If the wholesome grows, then the unwholesome cannot but grow less. If we are practicing correctly and continuously the mind will change for the better, towards the more wholesome. Because the mind is a conditioned process, the mind can be changed. If we feed the right conditions to the mind, then the effect will surely follow.

On a retreat we don't have a lot to do, and we try to use that time to explore and learn how to become skillful at how we meditate. If we then apply that skill back home we learn different sets of skills. If we do this over a long time it can become second nature to us. We spend so much time on retreat observing the defilements, dealing with the defilements, clearing unwholesome states of mind. Why when we go home do we allow the mind to feed the unwholesome states of mind again? Do we come on retreat to play?

The Buddha has said that the dhamma will benefit us both in the mundane and the supra-mundane. We will learn how to live life peacefully and meaningfully, and we will bring it all the way into the supra-mundane. Practicing Satipattana is a means of learning how to live skillfully and meaningfully in life.

I encourage us to continue practicing when we go home. It's for our own benefit. You will meet with difficulty, you will make mistakes, but don't give up. If you persevere through all those trials and tribulations you will come out winning on the other side.

Some yogis say they find it difficult to continue being mindful at home. Why would we think that? If we can do it on retreat we can do it at home. It's in our thoughts and our beliefs that while on retreat we believe we can do it, that we will try. But at home what are our beliefs?

How do you approach practice when you are on retreat? On retreat we are always thinking about how to practice. We are always remembering when we wake up that this is a day we will be mindful. We go to bed with that mind, we spend the day remembering that we are trying to be mindful. That's how we spend our days on retreat.

Can we do that at home? When you go home, whose home are you going home to? "My" home, "our" home, "your" home. The idea of self is very strong when we get home.

Everything we see, hear, touch and come in contact with becomes something to do with "me." Don't think of yourself as going home, to your home. Think of yourself as going somewhere to be. In the end, when we pass away, when we die, we leave all this behind anyway. We can't take it with us. Clearly it doesn't belong to us.

Thinking of it as "my" home gives more room for the defilements to plant themselves. So since the defilements we are going to have to face at home are stronger, then the practice we need to bring to it to meet these defilements needs to be as strong. We need to build it.

On retreat we begin to get glimpses of the principle of anatta, that everything is conditioned, that there are causes and effects. That things are happening just as they are. And some of this understanding, when we go home, we should challenge ourselves to see if the understanding is still up to task. It's not because we are not capable, it's just that we can't underestimate how capable the unwholesome states of mind can be.

When these unwholesome states come up, when they come around, sometimes they can be really strong. Our current practice might not be enough to deal with them effectively. If they are allowed to remain unchecked in the mind, unseen in the light of awareness, then they grow, unknown to us. Anything that is allowed to dwell in the mind will grow. So we want what dwells in there to be wholesome, like awareness.

It's when the power of the wholesome becomes very powerful that it can drive out the unwholesome. That's through the power of awareness. Every day when we get up in the morning, start the day with a purpose with a commitment and intention to live mindfully throughout the day. When we go to bed then it's good to reflect on the day and we learn from the day where we are most mindful, where we are least mindful, what we need to adjust, what our weaknesses and our strengths are, so that we can capitalize on them.

So when we've set the tone of the day at the beginning, we've cleared a path for the mind. Okay, we are going to try. And if we do that over and over and over again it will slowly start to seep into our lives. And if we have got an established practice, we've been doing this a long time, and we have quite a lot of continuity in our lives, we will notice how we don't even have to wait until the end of the day. As we do things mindfully, at the end of the activities the mind learns from that what it has done skillfully or unskillfully, and made plans for how to deal with it in the future. We will still make mistakes but we can learn from them so long as mindfulness is present.

We meet mostly the same people every day, we do mostly the same work every day, the same routines. At least for those, we should be learning how to have fewer and fewer reactions and more and more skillful responses.

If we are always watching our minds as we interact with people, places and situations—if we see how we feel, what we are thinking, our views and ideas—we eventually begin to learn enough that we can be with these interactions, people, places, situations and have more wholesome responses, skillful ones and less unskillful ones.

We will begin to see the ideas and views through which we operate our beliefs. Once these are seen, then we have the choice to make a change.

We don't have the same beliefs and attitudes towards everyone. For each and every person, situation and interaction we have different stuff come up in our minds. If the unwholesome reactions are very strong all the time, it's hard for wisdom to flower.

So if we can practice to the point that we have more continuity of mindfulness, we can maintain the stability of the mind, we learn lessons about how to do all that. Then we have laid the path and the foundation for wisdom to arise and grow.

So the retreat is not the only place for us to train our minds to recognize the unwholesome, learn to be mindful and deal with the unwholesome and grow the wholesome. It's when we take this training back home that the results and the benefits will be much more real. When we have real situations and real unwholesome reactions and volitions to work with, it takes a real practice to deal with it.

If we practice at home and we have that, we feel that the dharma is more and more in our lives. Our faith in the possibility of true liberation will really be strengthened. There are yogis who still struggle to integrate the dharma into their lives, and have it as a part of their lives. Know that this is just a lack of skill, it's not impossible to develop that skill. All we need to do is persevere and have the right attitude.

All of us know how fast the mind works, how intensely it can work. So if the awareness and the samadhi are not as trained and fast and powerful as the unwholesome then we will struggle a little bit, or a lot.

So we need to train the mind, train the awareness, become skillful. We also need to be skillful in facing all of the objects that arise in the six sense doors of the mind. We go on retreat to recharge our batteries, to train and strengthen our practice, to learn more and then we go home and then we apply what we have learned, and learn more lessons.

It's like learning boxing. When you are training no one throws you a really hard punch. But when you get in the ring those punches are real so you have to be fast and you have to be powerful when you want to throw a punch back. So it's either the unwholesome is in the corner or you are in the corner.

At first you will be in the corner. Never mind, just keep punching! Just keep being mindful. Then we will become very skillful and then we will be the champion.

If we are practicing daily, all day long, always with the intention and the commitment to try and bring awareness to every part of our lives, it will happen. The dhamma is the dhamma, it's a law of nature, so it's very just. If we look after the dhamma the dhamma will look after us. If we don't look after the dhamma, the dhamma can't look after us.

We can take heart in the fact that all of the effort we put in, at some point you will find that it becomes easier. The dhamma sort of comes in, takes you by the hand and shows you the way. In the beginning you have to make the effort for some length of time. Some yogis ask until when do they have to practice? Well, the unwholesome states of mind are very skillful at taking their place in the mind. It's like musical chairs, we have to build the skill of the wholesome minds, the mindfulness, samadhi and right effort and all, so that we get to the chair first. And when that happens consistently, you will know that you've got ahead of the game.

We know how long it will take. It depends on our wisdom, our right efforts, our samadhi, our awareness, our faith. I am very confident that everyone will go home and continue practicing. If you find that it is getting hard and you are struggling, don't worry, there is another retreat in which you can start training again. Charge your battery, go back home, get in the ring, try again.

In the Buddha's time there were no retreat centers. People just went to listen to dharma talks and then they practiced at home. So all we need is a willing mind and a determined one. We can't be naturally skillful at everything. There will be things we are unskillful at. We make mistakes but it is all part of the practice, we just keep going through them. Bring the mindfulness through them and learn and learn.

We get swept into our lives because so many things in life are pressing. Things in life need to be attended to, they are so important. But the dhamma is equally important. Although it may be slow in the beginning, eventually, if you give it the time, the dhamma will help us do all the things we need to do, skillfully and easefully.

What do you think is more valuable, the state of our mind or whether we get the things done that we need to get done? Other people are important but so is this person. Who is more important? What do you think?

Sometimes little things happen. It's not really worth very much but we give an inordinate amount of time and energy and unwholesome and unskillful energy to the situation or matter at hand. Sometimes it's just five dollars but we are so upset. Then it's like seeing our peace of mind is not worth five dollars. The unwholesome, the kilesas, they don't care, they just do what they want to do. The kilesas, they are ruthless, no mercy, not even a bit. They will just do what they have to do. So we have to be ruthless. "We" is just a matter of speaking. "We" represents sati, samadhi and panna—awareness, stability of mind and wisdom.

The Buddha said to rely on your self. But your "self" is supposed to be a concept, right, a "construct." So what did he mean when he said rely on your "self"? He meant to rely on the wholesome qualities of the mind. Rely on the wholesome. Cultivate those.

That's enough.

Are there any questions?

YOGI: Could Sayadaw address what he sees as the role and place of a formal daily sitting meditation, in relation to the full-time daily awareness practice that you taught on this retreat?

SUT: At all times of the day when we are alone, when we are not occupied, like if we are in the toilet, all of those moments are formal meditation moments. We should use them as such and we should use them as much as possible. In fact all of the time if possible. How long we spend on them does not matter. If we are determined to do it over and over again, in one day we will get many, many, many minutes of formal meditation. If you have time in your life that you can set up, to set aside time to actually do a sitting practice at some point in the day, you are welcome to do that as well. But not letting go of the rest of the other little bits of formal meditation you should do.

Every minute that we do it we are accumulating the power of the mindfulness. We go up in elevators, we go up escalators, we have to think of that time as sitting meditation or standing meditation. Elevator meditation. Otherwise we will be ahead in our minds, we will be thinking about what we are going to do next. I've seen in Singapore and Hong Kong, they get on the lift and keep pressing the button like it would make any difference. Their minds are just not settled, they are so hurried and impatient. And all that sort of behavior we allow to be expressed increases our stress.

YOGI: (Inaudible)

SUT: If we are skillful at mindfully recognizing seeing and looking we can become mindful of seeing and looking when we use the computer. That's a big part of using the

computer. We get to the point that we are aware of the mind's attention, if we can tune in to that activity of mind easily, every time we pay attention then mindfulness comes with it. Another thing that can develop is that we can be aware of the mind's attention, that the mind is being aware. If we can tune into that activity of mind easily we will also find that every time we pay attention, mindfulness comes with it.

Paying attention, looking, listening, are very similar postures of the mind. The mind is only operating through different sense doors but the movement of the mind is the same way. Initially we won't be able to do it, but we must not despair and give up. It's only normal, we are not skillful at always directing the mind inwards, at understanding what is the mind, and so on. When our mindfulness hasn't become natural we don't know how much attention we need to put outside in order to get something done effectively, so we put too much out and then we can't be mindful. It's something we need to learn from, by not being able to do it, from that learn how to do it.

With all that trying, momentum will grow. And when that momentum comes, you'll find that awareness tends to kick in again and again, it becomes easier and easier, although you have to keep the effort up. If or when we have so much momentum, then it's easy to be aware of the state of mind. So that there is so much momentum that we naturally tune in to the state of mind, then no matter what we do, we will be aware of that. We will notice instantly if there is stress or tension or relaxation in the mind, what thoughts are associated with them, and so on. But not in the beginning.

In the beginning we have to make the effort to notice how we feel, what are we doing, how are we doing it. It's a bit slow and we kind of lose it and bring it back, lose it and bring it back. It gets easier over time. You notice when it starts to become more skillful, you feel you are not having to put in so much effort to check, it is becoming natural to check. It just comes and does it. It's helpful if you have a way to remind yourself every couple of minutes or whatever is comfortable for you at regular intervals, if you have a way to remind yourself, to check in on yourself. Am I still mindful? How do I feel, what am I thinking? I am doing this work? What am I aware of? If you have a way to do that you will also find that structure helps it to settle in slowly over time.

YOGI: (Inaudible)

SUT: The question is how to plan mindfully. If we become skillful at recognizing the mind is thinking, the mind can plan and you are knowing that the mind is planning. It's not only the body that is in the present moment. Everything the mind does is also being done in the present moment.

You can know that the mind is planning. That's helpful. You can't focus on it very hard, like the way you might look at something in the body, because then you might be focusing so hard that you can't think enough to plan. So you have to have a more gentle awareness and allow the mind to plan. Just know you are in touch with it. The planning does its work and the awareness does its work.

That's why we have to practice so much, to learn how to watch thoughts objectively, the thinking mind, objectively. We also have to become very skillful at how to observe unpleasant sensations and feelings without getting averse towards them. We want to understand enough that we can know things that are unpleasant in our lives, because we will have so much of that, that we can watch them in an equanimous way. Not by trying to be equanimous but by learning.

We do need to plan, even for meditation. I recommend we think about it and know what we want to do. We do need to plan in our lives but you can know you are planning. Ideally we would be planning with a wholesome state of mind, we'd be planning without anxiety or greed or hurry or stress. It would be planning because we know how to and we do it peacefully.

YOGI: (inaudible)

SUT: Because our experience of mind is not actually like one mind at a time, because it's said that in one second a gazillion minds arise. But to us it feels like it's all there.

That's why awareness is able to know thinking. If you find that when you look at the thinking mind it disappears, just know that at that point it's because the mind is focusing on the thinking mind, so the mind can't think. When you look at thinking, thinking stops because you look at it so strongly. But it can be that there are thoughts that go on, even if you are looking at them, and you feel there are two trains going together. One is thinking and one is being aware. If we don't focus too hard we can see it that way.

The skill is learning to see that thinking mind as an object. When the mind recognizes that, sees that, understands that, the mind will be able to observe thinking mind.

Sometimes yogis come to see me and they ask me, "Sayadaw, being aware and thinking at the same time, can you teach us how to do that?" Remember, we don't need a whole lot of energy to be mindful in any moment. So we don't need to put a lot of focus, that sort of power, into the moment. We want to bring the strength of continuity. There was a yogi who always was confused when I talked about knowing thoughts. One day I said to him, can't you hear your thoughts? He was like, yeah. So, know what you are hearing in your thoughts. Then the yogi got it. So there are different ways that we can know our thoughts. Our thoughts are always talking to us, all sorts of dialogues and monologues. We do know the mind, we see it in action so much, we just need to recognize that we are knowing the mind.

We know when things start bubbling up in the mind. We know when the mind is planning and doing things. We do know. Often we are already aware of our thoughts and we think "I have to be mindful," but we are already aware of our thoughts and we think we have to be mindful and we pay attention. And that stops the thoughts. But actually, before that was enough, because there was awareness of thoughts. Vipassana is just about knowing what's happening. If we know, that's enough.

YOGI: (inaudible)

MA THET: Some people say Sayadaw is teaching cittanupassana. But Sayadaw always says, himself, that he is actually teaching all four foundations of mindfulness. We see from our own practice that we are watching the foundation of the body, we are watching our feelings, we are watching things happening in the mind, we are also learning to recognize the nature of things. That's all four foundations of mindfulness.

The reason that some people feel Sayadaw's teaching is cittanupassana is because Sayadaw talks so much about the mind. Because the mind is involved in everything. It is the condition for so many things to arise. He talks so much about noticing how the mind is being aware, how the mind is working, what attitude is in the mind. He talks so much about the mind so that we understand our practice which is being done by the mind.

That's why some people feel Sayadaw is teaching cittanupassana. He talks so much about the mind because we use the mind to practice. So if we did not understand the mind we would not become skillful at using the mind to practice. It can feel like he is talking about the mind a heck of a lot. In the Satipattana Sutta it talks about those three words referring to right effort, viriya, and wisdom and sati. Sayadaw says all of these happen in the mind that is meditating. If we don't talk about the mind that is meditating, how do we meditate? It's not about what we observe, it's how we observe.

Since we are learning to recognize these qualities at work, we can't not know or recognize the mind at work. So again it feels like a lot of cittanupassana going on. Seems like.

YOGI: Can enjoyment be a wholesome state?

SUT: Yes. Because when it is wholesome in the mind, the mind feels joy. Piti is a wholesome state of mind. That's joy. We are happy to practice, happy to do what's wholesome. We want to practice, we want to do service, we want to be generous. We feel good about it. That's wholesome. Of course it feels good.

YOGI: (inaudible)

SUT: That's greed, that's attachment. Greed is an unwholesome state of mind and greed comes with its attendant grasping and all of its work. When something is unwholesome it is energy-draining for the mind. Whereas when it is wholesome it brightens the energy of the mind and makes the mind lighter and more energized.

It's time to go home. Now you are going to go onstage. At home. You are going to meet your opponents, the real ones.

